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Open the Door!

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Looking Both Ways – A Lefebvrian Investigation of
Catherine Carswell's *Open the Door!*

Abstract

Catherine Carswell was a Glasgow-born writer and journalist who was intimately connected to her home town. She wrote about life in Glasgow in her first novel *Open the Door!* in a way that spoke of urban concerns, especially for her protagonist, Joanna Bannerman. By applying a Lefebvrian framework to these concerns, this essay examines in more detail than hitherto reflected in critical commentaries Carswell's engagement with urban space. Viewed through this framework, the heterotopic possibilities of her writing are laid bare and aligned with a modern and critical tradition of urban writing not identified before in Scottish literature.

Catherine Carswell's novel *Open the Door!* (1920), drawing to an extent on her own experiences growing up in Glasgow at the turn of the century, is generally considered a 'strong novel of a woman's life and emotions'.¹ D. H. Lawrence, a close friend of Carswell's, commented extensively on the work in progress. He wrote, for example, in 1914 that '[n]early all of it is *marvellously* good. [. . .] My good heart, there's some honest work here, real.'² A few years later he indicated of a revised version that it was 'much improved. – But it shakes me badly – with a kind of nerve-racking pain.'³ The emotional power of Carswell's first book is conventionally attributed to her uncompromising treatment of female sexuality,⁴ but in my view Carswell had much more to say, for example, about her native city of Glasgow. The imaginative possibility of urban Glasgow in *Open the Door!* has attracted some critical comments, but deserves a more thorough contextualisation within a critical framework, because this treatment directly recognises Carswell's contribution to modern urban Scottish literature. This paper, therefore, is framed in the context of a 'crisis in representation' that

argues for a heterotopic re-evaluation of *Open the Door!* and looks at it through a lens that analyses space as power.

Carswell was born Catherine Macfarlane in Glasgow in 1879, and her writerly strength was the depiction of those West End districts – Hillhead and North Kelvinside – where she grew up. Her biographer, Jan Pilditch, suggests that Carswell grew up literally ‘on the streets’.⁵ Carswell writes in her posthumous collection of autobiographical anecdotes, *Lying Awake* (1950), that she was often envious of the ‘ragged, bare-legged, blue-footed, verminous and valgus children’ living in the slums that ‘lapped murkily’ around her family home,⁶ and Pilditch notes that the city ‘represented many things to the young MacFarlanes – excitement, poverty, moral economy, even bleakness, dirt and disease’. She comments: ‘It was a city on the move and an exciting place for a young woman to come of age’.⁷ Carla Sassi declares that Carswell’s portrait of her home town in *Lying Awake* ‘reveals an author who has not only fully assimilated the city but even revels in its fluid and composite nature’.⁸ That much has been acknowledged in current criticism. Carol Anderson further states that Carswell’s fiction is notable for depicting modern urban life, and she focuses in her analysis on how Carswell is able to evoke the ‘bustle of early twentieth-century Glasgow’, yet she evades any closer engagement with the ‘spatial conditions’ she notices in Carswell’s writing.⁹ Glenda Norquay pertinently observes that *Open the Door!* is a novel about movement and space, but the traversing and transgressing of these spaces is not just caught up in topographic location, as Norquay suggests.¹⁰ Margery Palmer McCulloch praises Carswell’s depiction of Glasgow as a professional city, but ultimately focuses on Joanna Bannerman’s flight from provincial Glasgow to metropolitan London.¹¹

Carswell’s critiquing of chronotopic representation instead challenges the limitations of empirical space that has guided previous commentators. Their emphasis on social interaction, in which an ‘unfolding’ of awareness is situated against the imprisoning power of certain spatial metaphors,¹² barely goes beyond the observation of objects in space. Moira Burgess’s praise of Carswell’s ‘sense of period’,¹³ in addition, locates these objects in time. These commentaries have not considered the complexities of space as co-construction and lived experience, a treatment redolent of the ‘tame delineation of a given spot’, as Henry Fuseli derogatorily called such scene-making in the context of visual art.¹⁴ We appreciate the city as a social experience, but we are not encouraged to read it as a transgression against Cartesian

spatial representation. This depoliticised version of Glasgow acknowledges that it is, simply, Joanna Bannerman's 'place'.¹⁵ I would argue, however, that the novel is more than just an emotional response to locale. It is an intervention at the level of space in which localisation, a 'would be homogeneous space', according to Henri Lefebvre, is 'answered by divergence' and multiple perspectives.¹⁶ This divergence is, in my view, reflected in Carswell's novel through the perspective of 'looking both ways'.¹⁷

The concept of 'looking both ways' is, arguably, so deeply encoded into the Scottish cultural consciousness that it was given a name by G. Gregory Smith in 1919 – Caledonian antiszygy.¹⁸ It has, since then, frequently served as a way to construct an internally-conflicted national character driven by the energy of contradiction – 'So divided against myself' as Hugh MacDiarmid wrote in his poem of the same name. These dichotomies also reverberate in the multi-dimensionality of Glasgow as a city, looking, for example, both towards the West as a beacon of British industrialism at the height of the Victorian enterprise, as well as East towards the contending religious and professional rival Edinburgh. The same duality of perspective exists in the internal division between East and West End, between the North and Southside, with passengers travelling on the tram system to reach affluent neighbourhoods but bypassing the expanding inner city slums. S. G. Checkland writes: 'There were thus two Glasgows',¹⁹ though, arguably, Glasgow's spaces produce a jigsaw of perspectives. In Lefebvrian terms, it 'is answered by radiation, by influx and diffusion'.²⁰ These plural worlds afford lateral possibilities and shape a particular perspective, the 'idea of dueling polarities within one entity' that is especially relevant to gendered identity,²¹ and that investigates contested space as an uneven relation of class and gender.

Women writers had, by the early twentieth century, taken possession of the city as a relevant space for their narratives, a course of action that attracted criticism, for example in Hugh MacDiarmid's dismissal of 'Newer Scottish Fiction' that was increasingly penned by female writers.²² *Open the Door!* is, therefore, hailed by Jan Pilditch rather disingenuously as one 'of the first to be set in the urban Glasgow cityscape',²³ but Carswell's exploitation of the cityscape has yet to find its probing urban critic. This may be because her novel does not deal primarily with the problematic legacy of the so-called 'Glasgow Novel', which depicted working-class masculine anguish that conditioned a much gloomier image of the city, shaped by

depression, unemployment and industrial decline. Instead it fills a perceived 'middle-class void' through a representation of the commercial and professional elites, but also through references to the widening circle of the 'mocking, hard-working, mercurial people' who were Glasgow's true inhabitants, i.e. the retailers.²⁴ Margery Palmer McCulloch, therefore, calls *Open the Door!* 'that rare thing in Scottish fiction: a narrative of middle-class Glasgow.'²⁵ This *new* Glasgow focuses on what MacDiarmid and others considered the more 'effeminate' commercial activity of its citizenry.²⁶ It nevertheless tendered the perspective of the (male) elites, who, first as estate owners, and later as members on civic improvement boards, shaped the distinctive middle-class districts in the West End during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their civic enterprises brought into existence the fabric of *Open the Door!*, the city parks, bridges, roads and tramways, as well as urban villas, terraces and tenements, that incriminate the spatial practices of Carswell's heroine Joanna Bannerman.

However, the reason a bourgeois Glasgow has not widely caught the imagination may, according to Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place* (1966), be due to the fact that Glasgow's 'secular life [is] moderate and dull', and only the 'great industrial and inventive exploits seemed to give it a kind of charm, a feeling of energy and promise' (65). Alasdair Gray appraised such viewpoints in *Lanark* (1981), where his protagonist exclaims: 'Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels'; in fact, 'nobody imagines living here' (243). Yet such an impaired vision does not pay fair dues to Carswell, who could, in fact, imagine 'living here'.²⁷

In what follows I intend to highlight Carswell's subversive representations of the city as being alive with heterotopic possibilities. For this I draw on Henri Lefebvre's concept of social space and '*lieux-dits*' – named places – interpreted within a triad of spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces. Lefebvre's writing on space, which is informed by a historical materialist angle, hints at a subversive female perspective under what has commonly been read as a masculinist philosophy of space. As the editors of a recent collected edition of his writings point out, Lefebvre 'acts almost as a prehistorian of contemporary development [. . .] open to all manner of possible uses',²⁸ and this interpretative arc works not only forwards but also backwards, in that it allows a retrospective glance on the gendered cultural formation of space that informs Carswell's novel. It offers an opportunity to engage with literary urban space in a richer and

more insightful manner than is commonly applied, because it interrogates the scientific perception of 'abstract' Euclidian space within commonly accepted parameters. These abstract parameters recognise the city as a 'container' in which inhabitants live their lives, but not as an organic construct in which space pulses and flows. The complexity, or, as some critics aver, the inconsistencies, of Lefebvre's concept of social space,²⁹ has, therefore, the potential of bringing together the different qualities of physical space, time, and social relations that make up the phenomenological foundation of everyday existence in Carswell's novel.

In Lefebvre's framework, three considerations of space are fundamental to lived experience, and they are spatial practices (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space) and spaces of representation (lived space). Spatial practices denote the direct interaction between users and space, often inflected by special codes that are enacted within.³⁰ In simple terms, they embody the daily rituals and conventions that govern acceptable behaviour. In Carswell's novels such social practices are, for example, denoted by actions surrounding the doorstep. These actions can be socially cohesive or divisive, as people are either invited in or barred. Such dichotomies create narrative tensions in which women are frequently implicated as gatekeepers and subverters of these liminal spaces.

Representations of space are reflected in the conceptualised policies, blueprints and maps of town planners and architects, and they function as dominant, politically approved spaces.³¹ These conceptualised spaces are explicit spaces of power, and in Carswell's novels are signified by the public parks, streets, bridges, and tramways that organise the flow of humanity into discrete channels. These spaces bring with them official sanctions for use, such as 'Keep off the Grass' or 'Yield Right of Way', that order social life, but also provide opportunities for misappropriation and subversion. They are marked in such a way as to highlight the unsettledness of experience that inflects Joanna Bannerman as a modern woman.

Representational space, finally, signifies the private world conventionally inhabited primarily by women.³² This lived space, in conjunction with the other two aspects of the triad, constrains the individual's experience, but also allows for a localised interrogation of the spaces, e.g. through reorganising furniture or painting walls. It also allows for the potential of stashing evidence of intimate experiences through symbols or objects that are hidden away.³³ Drawers, desks and wardrobes become places of concealment and

secrecy in *Open the Door!*, speaking to a censored feminine experience of space.

The potentialities of Lefebvre's approach lie in the way it facilitates the contemplation of social, physical and mental spaces to provide an integrated perspective on the city. The power relations that govern these spaces traditionally tip towards male spatial dominance, for example in the sense of the traditionally male social dominance of the public sphere. Carswell, however, lets female experience infiltrate this urban hermeneutic and cross-examines the city as a gendered text – more specifically, a gendered text that records the interlacing tensions between (male) cosmopolitan and (female) bourgeois urban experience. These intersections of simultaneous positions – of a masculine professional urbanism and a feminine domesti-city, are important, because in order to be able to look both ways, one must stand at the threshold. This threshold represents the liminal point that concatenates Lefebvre's physical, mental, and social space. Joanna Bannerman inhabits a number of such liminal points within the city and modulates these concatenations in a variety of ways. These modulations can be mapped explicitly onto Lefebvre's framework of 'named places', of '*lieux-dits*', that are accessible rule-governed spaces (such as parks, roadways or rivers), boundaries and forbidden territories (governed by moral and social practices), places of abode (houses, rooms) and finally junction points.³⁴ These named places reproduce the integrated triad of social space illustrated earlier, in that they focus on social interactions within regulated physical boundaries conjured up by planners and governors, but also allow for private translations of these prescriptions.

ACCESSIBLE SPACE

In *Open the Door!*, a 'network of named places' is visible in the shape of Glasgow's streets and public parks. These seemingly neutral spaces nevertheless contain prescriptions about which pathways are accessible and which are closed off. A particular example of this accessible space is Kelvingrove Park, signifying the conceptual space of official town planning. Kelvingrove Park was the first purpose-designed park in Scotland. It came into existence, as Irene Maver reports, as an exemplar of Glasgow's wealthy middle class interventionism, advocating spiritual and aesthetic values, as well as secular

monetary interests, because its location in the West End was said to boost middle-class property values.³⁵ Originally labelled 'The West End Park', it signified civic pride and community control, rampant, as it was, with signs exhorting strollers to 'keep off the grass'.³⁶ In line with the nationwide 'public parks' movement, it was supposed to stress 'social cohesion', yet it was prized mainly for providing a wholesome contrast to the squalor of the city slums.³⁷

Joanna's forays into Kelvingrove Park, however, subvert the middle-class impulse to control public space by alluding to its failures. For example, designed in the Lefebvrian sense to be 'governed prescriptively – by established rules and practical procedures',³⁸ the park would instead 'become murmurous with lovers' (*OD* 89) by sunset, thereby disrupting civic moral prescriptions. Joanna herself uses it to hold trysts with her admirers, but she also uses its vantage points as a way to connect the gridlines that dissect the city. For example, near Park Terrace, where the now dismantled Crimean Guns were located until ca. 1940, she can 'look both ways' towards the neo-gothic towers of the University Building on Gilmourhill to the West, representing Glasgow's new civic pride, and to the south, 'where the real world began' at the Clydeside docks, representing the doomed industrial landscape. In her gaze the initial magic and beauty that has lent 'the poor and harsh outlines of this region' an 'appealing loveliness' (*OD* 89) slowly dissipates. In fact, the 'murkiness' of the air and the 'squalid, railed enclosure where growing things found a precarious life' (*OD* 89) reference the failed civic experiment, as the conceptualised wholesome green space surrenders to the polluted industrial environment that Carswell so clearly evokes in *Lying Awake*.

In Glasgow, grass hardly grew, and the soot-grimed trees and shrubs were rotted by chemicals which belched from 'Tennant's lum' and the other tall stalks. [. . . trees] even in the West End Park, where we were taken for gritty walks by our nurses, were as stunted and stricken as anything of human growth in our east end streets. (*LA* 51, 55)

Kelvingrove Park's official middle-class power is thus destabilised by sexual and industrial transgressions, revealing a concern with the inadequacies of

abstract notions of space reflected in Lefebvre's framework, and which Joanna enacts through her dual vision.

Accessible space is realised through walking the streets, which, in reference to de Certeau, denotes an 'elementary form' of urban experience, a 'speech act of meandering, criss-crossing and wandering.'³⁹ Parading the Great Western Road, the artery that had quickened the growth of the West End, Joanna and her family re-enact the urbanisation of the middle class burghs that were drawn evermore tighter into the urban grid through improved road networks. Through walking Joanna emulates the spatial practices of the ultimate urban figure, the solitary *flâneur*, who roams about the cityscape.⁴⁰ Janet Wolff asserts that central to the definition of the *flâneur* 'are both the aimlessness of the strolling, and the *reflectiveness* of the gaze', yet such qualities are conventionally denied women.⁴¹ The aimlessness of strolling is, therefore, a purely male prerogative, whilst women must, on the whole, have a social purpose for walking the streets, such as running an errand, going to church or going shopping (*OD* 167).

Historically, therefore, the woman in the street presents a disruption to the 'orderliness, controllability and power' that the city space exerts, and her new visibility at the turn of the twentieth century is indicative of a militant pedestrianism. In the Scottish context in particular, walking the streets ('vaguing') on Sunday was still perceived sinful, and so the practice of Sunday strolling required additional sanction by the Kirk that watched over Sabbath desecration with a 'periscopic' eye.⁴²

In Collessie Street here was the deathly atmosphere of the Sabbath. [. . .] The streets were worse than indoors. Though it was afternoon they resounded with gratuitous church bells. They were tolerable at such times only for swift passage. (*OD* 240)

Swift passage was achieved through the new electric tram system with which Glasgow town planners funnelled people across the public spaces of the city, and connected the disparate yet homogeneous middle-class areas in the north to those across the river. Glasgow's tram system was a rousing symbol of modernity that released women in particular from the limitations imposed on walking by themselves. Joanna was, therefore, able to achieve agency and mobility against the traditional sanctions of the Scottish moral code: 'Joanna swung away to the South Side of the town, perched and

clinging to her hat on a wildly rocking tramcar. (The electric cars rushed and swayed on a Sabbath with special defiance [. . .])' (OD 241).

The accessibility of space through public transport and the road system is regulated by the implicit and explicit rules that govern their usage. The iron tramlines allow for modern flux, but they also stand for social disengagement and separation. The same disengagement facilitates Joanna and Pender's walk 'without colliding' towards their designated tryst in Kelvingrove Park. They are framed by the network of streets, the 'regular lines of the wide stairway' and the 'sweeping curve of pavement' (OD 223). This Euclidian abstract space is invaded by the 'blue haze' of the industrial secretions covering the park, and is thereby made more imprecise and equivocal. What urban historians and geographers call the democratic function of the ideal public space – 'communication, conversation and everyday social interaction'⁴³ – is furtively disrupted by the secrecy with which the lovers walk in silence and in darkness.

Ultimately, Joanna is no longer a 'victim of the street'.⁴⁴ As an explorer of the accessible spaces in Glasgow, she is able to work against the inscribed social codes associated with these conceptual and bounded zones, a feat which ultimately meant she had to 'follow a path into the unknown, and a path unexpectedly solitary' (OD 267).

BOUNDARIES AND FORBIDDEN TERRITORIES

Lefebvre suggests boundaries will have 'different aspects according to type of society',⁴⁵ and are thus heavily inscribed by spatial practices. The type of society referenced in Carswell's novel is one in transition, as the perceived certainties of stolid Victorian values are slowly being eroded by the modern project. Hence the margins and interstices suggested by the transitional nature of space denote a state between being and becoming. The city is fragmenting into different spaces, and Joanna enters these heterogeneous spaces by stepping across thresholds, an action interpretable either as a safe retreat or a dangerous transgression. Importantly, crossing thresholds allows for a momentarily 'looking both ways', a looking behind and in front, that is emplotted in a physical movement in the 'betweenness of place'.⁴⁶ Sarah Dunnigan declares that *Open the Door!* is 'poised on several thresholds',⁴⁷ though she focuses on metaphorical rather than conceptual designations of

the threshold. Yet these conceptual spaces – the bridge, the stair and other crossing points – separate and simultaneously link the heterogeneous spaces of the modern city.

In Lefebvrian terms, a bridge is an engineered site that ‘introduces a new form into a pre-existing space – generally a rectilinear or rectangular form such as a meshwork or chequerwork’.⁴⁸ In Joanna’s case, such phenomenological representation occurs almost immediately at the beginning of the book, when, as a child, she looks out of her train onto the river ‘framed in the great transverse shanks of the iron grille’ (OD 7). The Caledonian Railway Bridge leading from Central Station presents a ‘picture cut into sections and made brilliant by the interposing trellis of black metal’ (OD 7). The ‘closed, sterilized, emptied out’ space of the blueprint⁴⁹ is, however, populated by Joanna’s visceral response to the beauty of the scene. It denotes a crisis of representation that subverts the abstract considerations of the engineers.

Atherton (1991) outlines how road construction and bridge building projects in Glasgow prefaced the West End developments across the River Kelvin and the River Clyde, and how the series of bridges appearing by the end of the nineteenth century allowed for easier transit across the city.⁵⁰ These bridges make their regular appearance in the narrative as geodesics, straight lines connecting two points on a curve. The ‘new granite bridge’ with its triple globes (OD 90), for example, denotes Kirklee Bridge, opened in 1900, with its ornamental three-armed lamps. Walking with Mario in Kelvingrove Park (OD 100–01), Joanna crosses what must be the Prince of Wales Bridge, built in 1868, and which was a central crossing point during the International Exhibition of 1888. The span of the bridge brings together the extremities of the city and services its function as an access point. However, not all bridges follow this simple geometry and instead reflect the political and economic ambitions of their engineers as boundary. Walker’s Bridge (Queen Margaret Bridge), for example, referenced by Joanna as the ‘lower bridge’ (OD 204), is confronted by a massive retaining wall on its northern side. It is a reminder of John E. Walker’s competition with the City of Glasgow Bank and their Belmont Bridge, referenced by Joanna as the ‘high bridge’ (OD 198).⁵¹ These bridges do not connect but dissociate space and time on the horizontal, whilst the vertical is serviced by the many stairs that are means of communication across this undulating city.

Many of the middle-class districts in Glasgow are built on steep conical

hills called drumlins, which provided a way to escape the polluted atmosphere of the industrial city.⁵² Lefebvre, who commented on the architecture of the stairway in the Mediterranean context, considered it a 'link between spaces', but also a 'localised time par excellence' in terms of the urban rhythm they evoke.⁵³ Steps are initiatory in the demands they make on the body, because they require the body to attune to its rhythm. Hence Bob and Joanna, who are frequently ascending and descending steps together, 'went on more slowly across the paved landing to the top of the next flight' (*OD* 60–61) when interlocking their bodies. However, as the plot unfolds, their bodies become more and more out of step. This Lefebvrian point of friction between space and the body highlights how space is 'just as concrete as [. . .] the body'.⁵⁴ Bridges and staircases both evoke complementary notions of foothold and precipice, and serve as conceptualisations of timed social interaction controlled by engineered space.

PLACES OF ABODE

Lefebvre considers representational space to be where subjective lives assert themselves against public ones.⁵⁵ The family home, for example, must be viewed as a borderland between the public and the private, a space traditionally dedicated to the female perspective and a 'text to be read for its ideological import'.⁵⁶ In Carswell's novel, public and private functions of the home frequently cross over. The private home is a place of worship and of conviviality, as well as a transgressive space for illicit meetings (*OD* 266). It is a distinctly female space into which men only intrude for sexual purposes. They do not live 'inside' but must linger on the doorstep and await the invitation of the traditionally female gatekeeper (*OD* 75, *OD* 80).⁵⁷

The doorstep, or doorway, has, therefore, explicit sexual connotations for Joanna, who suffers from a Freudian complex (*OD* 27). In that sense, crossing the doorstep hints at something hidden or forbidden. Her significant sexual encounter is consequently 'in the doorway [when] she came face to face with Pender' (*OD* 183). The doorstep becomes a contested space between the two lovers as, at first, "the door was shut between them" (*OD* 188). The sexual symbolism of the closed door prevails, until their ultimate sexual congress at the North Kelvinside house, when '[s]he opened

to him, and in a close, speechless embrace they leaned against the inner side of the door till the catch went home' (OD 265).

Joanna is aware of the dangerous periscopic function of the liminal space that is signified by the doorstep. In preparation for her tryst with Pender she encounters not only well-meaning family friends but an official law enforcer, who, as she struggles with her keys to gain entry at the door 'followed her movements furtively and she could hardly endure it' (OD 264). These incidents recall, of course, *La Porziuncola* and 'the little sunken door in the wall' that Joanna encountered in Italy (OD 131). This symbol of sexual transgression connotes a perceived dissidence beneath the surface of a conventional female life within the four walls of her home.

The private house remains nevertheless a concrete symbol of the 'woman as environment'.⁵⁸ Business woman Mrs Pringle, for example, reigns over *Sans Souci*, the South Side villa in which "the doors of all the rooms were left open" to facilitate an "atmosphere of sweethearting" (OD 169). Yet this apparent sexual freedom, illustrated by a lack of a threshold that first attracts Joanna, was not appreciated by the Pringle girls who "hated the disorder and publicity of their home-life" (OD 195) and who yearned for the 'dignified quiet' of a conventionally gendered home – probably behind closed doors. The enforced bohemianism of *saloniere* Mrs Lovatt's house, on the other hand, 'imposed a peculiar restraint' (OD 174) on Joanna, whose muscles, "from the moment the front door closed [. . .] would stiffen a little in the involuntary effort" of walking down the entrance hall (OD 175). The suffocating presence of Lawrence Urquart's mother (OD 200) complements a triad of female domestic manifestations that destabilise the house as a simplistic representational space.

For Joanna and her family, home was an 'ugly, well-built house at the corner [that] felt like a part of themselves' (OD 25). Collessie Street is depicted in similar tones to Carswell's childhood home at 127 Renfrew Street (*LA* 21–22), and Carswell commented in her biography that '[i]t is a little strange, when one comes to think of it, what a large place houses and rooms occupy in any human life, how much these insentient things mean to our emotions' (*LA* 30). This sentiment is visible in many instances in *Open the Door!*, and becomes pronounced at the time of moving. Joanna's family 'flits' from Collessie Street (Hillhead) to North Kelvinside (Doune Quadrant), and in the process of moving Joanna handles the furniture she has known since early childhood. The representation of the house creates an

illusion of knowledge and identity for Joanna, because, as Gaston Bachelard states, we colonise our spaces with 'stuff'.⁵⁹ For Joanna, her mother's writing desk signifies the many failures of the matriarch, and her frustration is heightened when she prepares to empty out the house: 'The state of the hidden places in Collessie Street was a fresh revelation to her of her mother's cumbered life' (*OD* 257). Joanna attends to the secret drawers of her mother's wardrobe and unwraps the 'unfathomable store [. . .] of intimacy' accrued within with a sense of shame. Bachelard notes that we ponder the psychology that lies behind locks and keys: 'Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten, are 'housed'. Our soul is an abode. And by remembering 'houses' and 'rooms', we learn to 'abide' within ourselves'.⁶⁰ Joanna is, however, unreceptive to these meanings: 'Without a single pang she took leave of the despoiled, sad walls' (*OD* 261). This is because the new house provides a space unencumbered by censorious memories, where her love for Pender can be consummated:

The house was utterly still, and from outside she could hear no sound but the faint, determined rushing of the stream far down where it passed by the flint mill. [. . .] it was a room prepared for the beloved and therefore lovely. (*OD* 262)

Situated near the Old Woodside flint mill that stood on Gariochmill Road, space springs into being in the empty house by ensuring the 'material fitness' of the rooms.

JUNCTION POINTS

In Lefebvre's understanding, junction points are places of passage and encounters that, in contrast to the guarded thresholds above, are explicitly linked to the act of trespassing. Junction points adhere to Lefebvre's notion of representations of space in which conceptualized information is 'conveyed by images and signs', such as a door post.⁶¹ Whilst a door reflects the logic of separation through clearly defined access points (e.g. the doorstep), the junction points signifies a site in constant flux – a representation of friction or infringement.

Lefebvre also writes: 'Social Space does incorporate one three-dimensional aspect, inherited from nature, namely the fact that between what is above

(mountains, highlands, celestial beings) and what is below (in grottos and caves) lie the surfaces of the sea and of the earth's flatlands, which thus constitute planes (or plains) that serve both to separate and to unite the height and the depths'.⁶² These planes can be considered junction points where the verticals infringe the horizontals through sublime transformation. Carswell's treatment of the city is one that stresses its vertiginous and precipitous chasms and peaks that puncture the horizon. In *Open the Door!* Joanna is constantly high above the world from which she gazes down. The spatial arrangement of Glasgow is, as social geographers have noted, ordered across ideological lines, as the middle-classes occupied the peaks of the drumlins in the West-end, leading in Carswell's case, 'precipitously to the denser purlieu of the Cowcadden' (*LA* 21). Hence, throughout *Open the Door*, the tenements aspire to a sheer escarpment of stone, '[a]nd above them, across the great moist arch of sky, so candid and pale, an endless volume of cloud streamed up like smoke from the horizon' (*OD* 63).

Enacting Lefebvre's three-dimensions, Carswell's Glasgow constantly reveals junction points in which the immovable physicality of the stone merges with the luminosity of the sky, literally merging the horizon: 'Above the stony, clear austerity of the town curved the sky' (*OD*, 216). In a divergent image the wet streets 'held pearly reflections of the pale, torn sky' (*OD* 59). The lofty sky is a dominant feature of Carswell's spatial configuration, arching, curving and signifying a vast expanse, displacing space 'outwards from the centre, the body of the thinking and acting subject'.⁶³

Another junction point occurs when she subverts the abstract conceptualised information of the roads and bridges. The technicians who plotted and constructed them envisaged how they consumed space by linking distant points together, but in Carswell's representation the space is not consumed but opened up once again through the confluence of the man-made and the esoteric. The New City Road is, for example, 'incandescent [. . .] its sordid glare of shop windows made beautiful by distance.' The Glasgow tenements resemble a 'dense forest screen hung unevenly with barred, many coloured lanterns' and shop fronts look like 'a necklace of gold and brilliants curved in a velvet case and with the coloured lights of a chemist – a great ruby and emerald for its central gems' (*OD*, 61–63). These impressions evoke an extra-dimensional space of an otherworldly, almost spectral, quality that is pitted against the Euclidian geometric spaces envisioned by the city planners.

The same spectral feature is evident in the School of Art, whose chthonic qualities reference what is below, 'disfigured by moonlight' mixed with the 'straggling rays of a street lamp' (*OD* 184). The incongruity of his image encourages readers to reparse the information leading to Joanna's incarnation as moon-maiden. In contrast the deserted City Chambers become the stepping stones to the 'sunshiny leads' above (*OD* 226) stretching once again to the Glasgow sky. Sporting the largest marble staircase of its time in Western Europe, the City Chambers stands as a symbol of Glasgow's civic pride, similarly to the Glasgow School of Art, but in *Open the Door!* civic space is profaned as well as numinous, to make space not hegemonic but heterotopic.

The city space at the beginning of the twentieth century seems to be fragmenting, and old processes of urbanisation no longer seem representative of increasingly complex axes of class, gender and other hierarchies. This results in the heterotopic quality of space that is reflected in Carswell's novel and which was teased out above within a Lefebvrian framework of conceived, perceived and lived spaces. Instead of regarding literature merely as a source of history and geography, Carswell's narrative unravels threads of spatial practices that render Glasgow a fluid space. We can follow Joanna on a map, but the map more often than not dissolves into a flux of social phenomena that are interrogated by her. This is in accordance with the 'spatial turn' in twentieth-century thought that questions conventional thinking about space as unproblematic – restricted, as it was, to the materiality of the environment. Glasgow's granite setts amongst the subdued flow of the Clyde, however, defy a purely monistic interpretation, because the spaces, especially in terms of junction points, have pluralist functions that blend into each other.

Carswell's Glasgow, therefore, is framed in a Lefebvrian critique of abstract space, and space is portrayed as being fundamental to a pluralistic lived experience of her heroine. The conventionally deadening nature of representations of space, representational space and spatial practices that dominate urban narratives in terms of partition, reduction and reification are subverted in Carswell, in particular by focusing on the equivocal representation of space that focuses on the interstices, the junction points that exist in the fissures of the city map. They are investigated by the perspective of 'looking-both-ways', highlighting an oblique viewpoint that takes in more than just the abstract measurement of the Euclidian space. Civic space

is reconfigured as intimate space, whilst private places are policed by external powers. The solid ground becomes a tide with waves crashing upwards into the sky, or a jungle-like, almost primitive, portrayal of civic (and intentionally civilising) architecture that undermines the town-planners conceptualisations of moral practices.

Carswell thus recaptures Glasgow from simplistic readings by extending space beyond the conventional joint construct of daily life and imagination into a Lefebvrian triad of conceived, perceived and lived space. She highlights throughout the junction points in which these spaces interact in a transgressive way, a transgression predominantly informed by the gender of her protagonist. These transgressions serve as an impetus to notice and learn how to look at the space in a fresh way to investigate the social world.

S. G. Checkland highlighted there was ‘sense of common identity amongst Glaswegians’ strengthened by shared (middle-class) experience, e.g. riding the trams, shopping in Sauchiehall street, parading the Great Western Road (22–23). These experiences are not absent from Carswell’s narrative, but, as I have argued, are rephrased into a critique of urban spatial practices. *Open the Door!* is, therefore Carswell’s direct contribution to a modern cross-examination of urban space and gendered identity that goes beyond the modest appraisal often bestowed upon the novel. The significance of the spatial references in the narrative enable the reader to look both ways and encounter the full complexity of Glasgow at the turn of the twentieth century.

Notes

- 1 Moira Burgess, *The Glasgow Novel 1870–1970: A Bibliography* (Glasgow: Scottish Library Association, 1972), p. 20.
- 2 Letter to Catherine Jackson, 29 June 1914 (emphasis in the text), in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. II, ed. by George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 188.
- 3 Letter to Catherine Carswell, 27 October 1917, in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. III, ed. by James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 173.
- 4 Margery Palmer McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism and its Context 1918–1959: Literature, National Identity and Cultural Exchange* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 75.

- 5 Jan Pilditch, *Catherine Carswell: A Biography* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007), p. 7.
- 6 Catherine Carswell, *Lying Awake* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997), p. 16. Hereafter *LA* cited parenthetically in the text.
- 7 Pilditch, pp. 10–11.
- 8 Carla Sassi, *Why Scottish Literature Matters* (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 2005), p. 107.
- 9 Carol Anderson, 'Writing Spaces', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 113–21 (117–18).
- 10 Glenda Norquay, 'Catherine Carswell: Open the Door!' in *A History of Scottish Women's writing*, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 389–99.
- 11 Margery Palmer McCulloch, 'Oh Scotland, oh My Country!' Catherine Carswell and the Scottish Renaissance', *Opening the Doors: The Achievement of Catherine Carswell*, ed. by Carol Anderson (Edinburgh: Ramsey Head, 2001), pp. 36–50 (37).
- 12 See e.g. Palmer McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism*, p. 75.
- 13 Moira Burgess, *Imagine a City: Glasgow in Fiction* (Argyll Publishing, 1998), p. 23.
- 14 Henry Fuseli, 'The British Institution', *The London Magazine* 3 (April 1821), pp. 437–38. hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433081672028 [accessed 25 August 2015].
- 15 Palmer McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism*, p. 72.
- 16 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 192.
- 17 Tom Nairn, 'The Modern Janus', *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (Altona: Common Ground Publishing, 2003), pp. 317–50.
- 18 G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 4.
- 19 S. G. Checkland. *The Upas Tree: Glasgow 1875–1975 . . . and after 1975–1980* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1981), p. 22.
- 20 Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 192.
- 21 Maureen Martin, *The Mighty Scot: Nation, Gender, and the Nineteenth-Century Mystique of Scottish Masculinity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), pp. 84–85.
- 22 Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Newer Scottish Fiction' Pt. 2, *Contemporary Scottish Studies* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Educational Journal, 1925–1927), pp. 110–11.
- 23 Pilditch, p. 93.
- 24 Catherine Carswell, *Open the Door!* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996), p. 168. Hereafter *OD* cited parenthetically in the text.
- 25 Palmer McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism*, p. 72.
- 26 MacDiarmid, pp. 110–11.
- 27 See also Margaret Palmer McCulloch, 'Interwar Literature', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 103–12.
- 28 Henri Lefebvre, *Key Writings*, ed. by Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas and Eleonore Kaufman (London: Continuum, 2003), p. xvi.
- 29 Tim Unwin, 'A Waste of Space? Towards a Critique of the Social Production of Space . . .', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 25 (2000), pp. 11–29.
- 30 Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 8.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

- 35 Irene Maver, 'Glasgow's Public Parks and the Community: 1850–1914: a Case Study in Scottish Civic Interventionism', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), pp. 323–47 (p. 330).
- 36 Ibid., pp. 325, 331.
- 37 cf. J. Carré, 'The Public Park', in *The Cambridge History of Britain*, Vol. 7: Victorian Britain, ed. by B. Ford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 79–80. See also Maver, p. 330. Public parks were intended as a homogenising and normative democratic space, 'designed for a single predominant culture' in which moral standards were upheld. Catharine Ward Thompson, 'Urban Open Space in the Twenty-First Century', *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 60 (2002), pp. 59–72 (60).
- 38 Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 193.
- 39 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 97, 119.
- 40 Carol Anderson, 'Writing Spaces', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. by Glenda Norquay (2012), pp. 113–21 (117).
- 41 Janet Wolff, 'Gender and the Haunting of Cities (Or, the Retirement of the *Flâneur*)', *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, ed. by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 21.
- 42 Willa Muir, 'Mrs Grundy in Scotland', in *Imagined Selves*, ed. by Kirsty Allen (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996), pp. 16–17.
- 43 '[P]ublic space has traditionally been (and can ideally be) associated with political values which are seen as a substantial part of the public sphere. Thus, we can view public space as an ideal vision of the linkage between the public sphere and public space'. Neil M. Inroy, 'Urban Regeneration and Public Space: The Story of an Urban Park', *Space and Polity*, 4 (2000), pp. 23–40 (25).
- 44 Roswitha Mueller, 'The City and Its Other', *Discourse*, 24 (2002), pp. 30–49 (32–33).
- 45 Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 193.
- 46 J. Nicholas Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), cited in Andrew Merrifield, 'Place and Space: A Lefebvrian Reconciliation', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 18 (1993), pp. 516–31 (518).
- 47 Sarah M. Dunnigan, 'The Hawk and the Dove: Religion, Desire and Aesthetics in *Open the Door!*', in Anderson, p. 107.
- 48 Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 165.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 164–65.
- 50 Cynthia M. Atherton, 'The Development of the Middle Class Suburb: The West End of Glasgow', *Scottish Economic and Social History* (1991), pp. 19–35 (26).
- 51 Glasgow Herald, 20 October 1870. Cited at Glasgow's West End www.scotcities.com/westend/northkelvinside.htm [accessed 2 September 2015].
- 52 Atherton, p. 20.
- 53 Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Regulier, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 96.
- 54 Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 193.
- 55 Ibid., p. 362.
- 56 Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 108.
- 57 See e.g. Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Women on the Threshold', in *Shakespeare Studies* 25, ed. by Leeds Barroll (London: Associated University Press, 1997), pp. 50–58.

58 Willa Muir, p. 58.

59 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. xxxvii.

60 Ibid., p. xxxvii.

61 Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 233.

62 Ibid., p. 194.

63 Ibid., p. 194.

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